



Foresight4Food

International Collaborative Initiative

Foresight4Food Methods Workshop

Summary of Proceedings

27-28 February 2020

Key Messages

The Foresight4Food Methods Workshop 2020 focused on understanding the relationship between food systems foresight approaches and governance processes and developing recommendations for improving the policy impact of foresight exercises. The event resulted in the following key messages for the Foresight4Food Initiative and the Community of Practice (CoP) in terms of best practice and activities related to the Food Summit 2021.

Key Messages

- There is increasing recognition that more food foresight work is needed at national and regional levels.
- There is a rich plurality of conceptualizations, definitions, and processes within the food foresight community. However, there is not a method of exchange and communication within and between the Community of Practice (CoP).
- Food systems foresight is fast becoming a crowded and competitive field where Foresight4Food will need to find its niche or develop a useful method of coordination and/or consolidation.
- Through the Foresight4Food Initiative, the CoP can potentially tackle issues that may be beyond individual institutional remits and respond to current and oncoming food systems foresight challenges.
- The Food Summit 2021 will be useful in aligning different foresight exercises and initiating new ones to fill research gaps and respond to food foresight needs at national scales.

Potential Contributions of Foresight4Food for Food Summit 2021

- Supporting an understanding of the contexts, perspectives, roles, and activities of the community of practice members.
- Conducting a meaningful synthesis of food systems foresight work.
- Developing and coordinating national and regional level food foresight exercises with expert input from the CoP.
- Developing national and regional level experimental platforms (labs) to explore innovation in food systems foresight.

Next Steps for the Foresight4Food Initiative

- Define the boundaries and niche for Foresight4Food given the currently crowded and competitive space in food systems foresight. F4F could be a space for cooperation and coordination across different initiatives to enhance the impact that foresight methods could have in governance processes.
- Design and structure the Initiative's current manifestation to respond to existing funding processes.
- Position the Foresight4Food Initiative to strategically explore innovative and potentially controversial themes in food systems foresight.
- Enriching the Foresight4Food website and resource dashboard to support the CoP through providing thematic packages of knowledge, tool kits, etc.
- Providing a mechanism for collective exchanges in different themes, e.g. to encourage understanding of existing techniques

Next Steps for the Foresight4Food Community of Practice

- Visioning a direction of travel for the future of food systems and identifying the role of the CoP within it
- Developing mechanisms to foster the next generation of foresight workers
- Developing a 'best practice' guide for foresight exercises in terms of methodology, impact, communication, and usefulness in different contexts
- Exploring innovative forms of capacity building for doers as well as foresight users with institutions across scales and sectors

Introduction and Context

The Foresight4Food Initiative was conceived by over forty key science institutions, international agencies, leading research institutes, food systems platforms and development organisations who participated in scoping meetings in Oxford in 2017 and in Montpellier in 2018. The Initiative was developed in response to the need to strengthen local, national and global capabilities to develop and use food systems foresight and scenario analysis, and the need to better link science and modelling with processes of stakeholder dialogue and decision making.

Foresight4Food aims to help policy makers and food system practitioners better understand possible future scenarios, based on combining trend analysis, assessment of critical uncertainties and understanding non-linear systems relations. It seeks to enhance the necessary capabilities for engaging actors in exploring how plausible futures might unfold and for assessing scenarios to achieve alternative food system outcomes.

To support this, Foresight4Food works to connect quantitative modelling and qualitative foresight processes based around a food system framework and a coherent foresight approach in ways that meet user needs and ensure policy relevance. It works across international agencies, research institutes and the private sector and on issues affecting both the global south and the global north.

The Methods Exchange Workshop emerged directly from the outcomes of the Montpellier meeting of 2018. It brings together three of our key areas of focus, i.e. engagement with our community of practice, developing a deeper understanding of food systems foresight, and catalysing new work on knowledge gaps and emerging issues. The workshop primarily aimed at examining the methods used in food systems foresight initiatives together with the role of foresight in wider governance and decision-making processes to explore the need for innovation and new approaches.

For this purpose, the workshop collaborated with the RE-IMAGINE project, which investigates how policy makers, businesses, civil society, community groups and individual citizens are imagining and steering towards desired climate futures, focusing on the role of foresight as a decision-making tool in devising current and future climate policies. RE-IMAGINE is led by the Utrecht University, Wageningen University & Research, Oxford University and the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) Scenarios Project, and is funded by the BNP Paribas Foundation.

The workshop's activities were geared towards identifying the key next steps in the space of food systems foresight methods for the Foresight4Food Initiative and the Community of Practice. These activities were explored in the context of potential contributions to the Food Summit 2021 and the strategic directions of the Initiative.

Anticipatory Governance of Food Systems Transformation

Effective governance is a challenge in the current ever-changing environment driven by complex sets of interacting drivers. Increasingly, the governance challenge is about anticipating, imagining, and governing the future, in which foresight processes form an essential component. While foresight is not directly connected to policy panning, foresight exercises are often encouraged by policymakers to make policy more problem oriented. However, this may be viewed as a way for policymakers to deflect potentially contested decisions. Given that future scenarios may not always be considered policy-relevant, or address governance-related drivers, it becomes necessary to see how foresight can contribute to relevant futures.

The realm of ‘future’ studies has become increasingly interdisciplinary in the past few years. There is, however, a lack of research into the anticipatory steering effects of foresight in decision-making processes. The notion of anticipatory governance has been used as a conceptual hook to study foresight as part of anticipatory governance. By anticipatory governance we mean the evolution of steering mechanisms in the present to imagine, assess, adapt to and/or shape uncertain (climate) futures. For the purposes of the methods workshop, the key emerging questions in this area are:

- What methods, tools and processes are proposed to explore the future?
- What are the ultimate aims for engaging with the future?
- Why is a foresight processes undertaken within the governance process?
- How is the future conceptualized in these diverse processes?
- How does this impact on policy choices in the present?

The academic paper under development (Muiderman, K., Gupta, A., Vervoort, J. and Biermann, F., under review) demonstrates that there are diverse understandings of anticipatory governance, with differing in terms of (a) their conceptions of the future, (b) the tools and methods proposed to engage with the future, (c) the implications for governance and policy choices in the present, and (d) the desired ends. The framework below in Figure 1 visualizes four internally coherent narratives, ‘ideal-types’ that can be used to analyse foresight processes in different contexts.

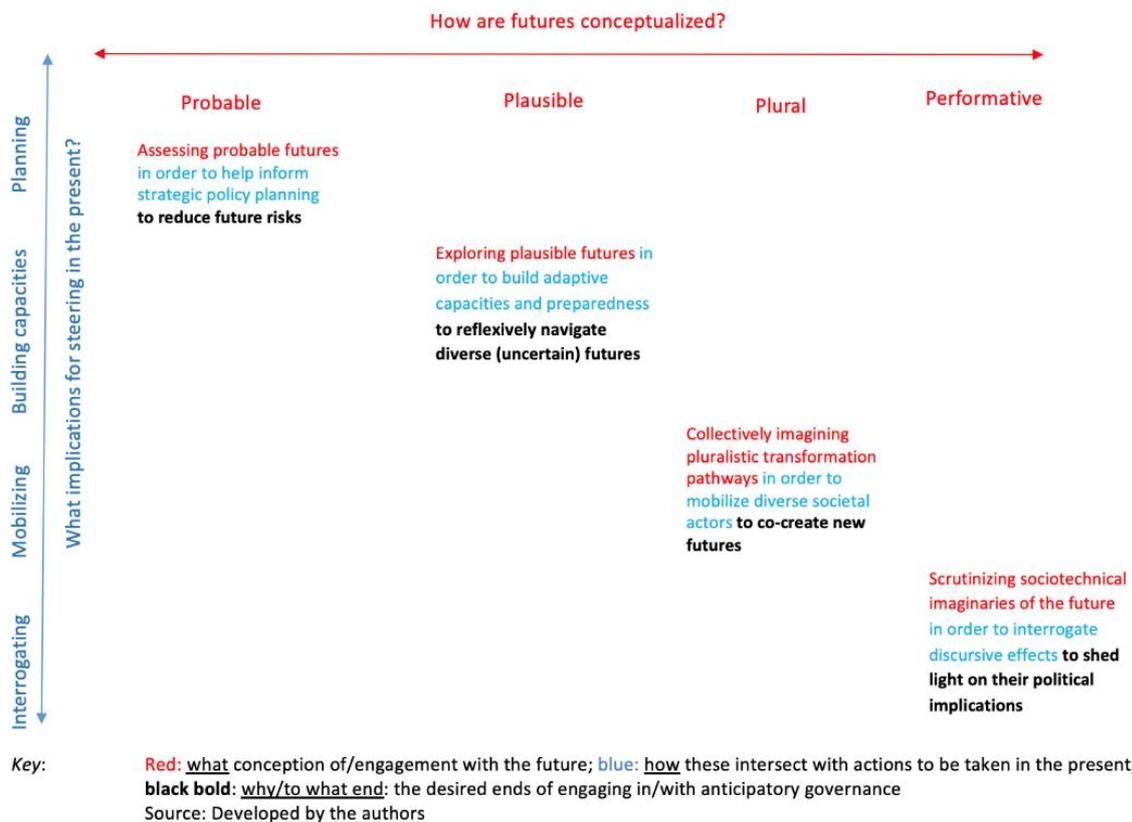


Fig 1: Analytical Framework on Anticipatory Governance: ideal-types

The paper also shows that while some methods and tools align with certain approaches, other methods and tools are used within multiple approaches, yet having diverse implications for policy action in the present. Thus, the way in which these methods are employed matters for policy choices in the present. In this way, despite the lack of a 'direct' connection of foresight with policy making, foresight shapes policy and governance processes in diverse ways. It is therefore important to analyse how foresight processes steer choices in the present and how foresight can therefore be better configured with the governance processes they are meaning to inform. This results in the following framework in Figure 2 that presents the foresight space embedded within the governance space, therefore considering foresight as a governance intervention.

In order to study this in the Foresight4Food context, Figure 2 was used to direct the flow of activities during the workshop and gain feedback on the underlying concepts and the different ways futures are conceptualized.

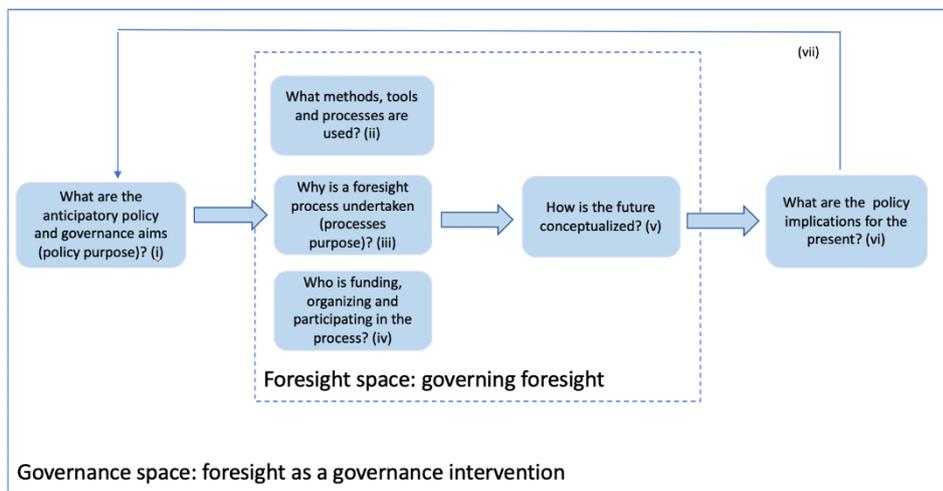


Figure adopted from Vervoort & Gupta and further adjusted based on Muiderman, Gupta, Vervoort et al.; Henrichs, Zurek et al.; Hebinck et al.; Wilkinson 2017; Börjeson et al. 2006; Hackett et al. 2008)

Fig 2: Purposefully designing anticipatory governance from the perspective of the user and users: making anticipation more governance-literate

Box 1: Methods, Tools, and Processes

The first key activity of the workshop was to address 'Box 1' in Figure 2 in a participatory way. Participants were paired and had to explain the foresight activities they were engaged in. This process started developing the matrix of methods and purposes presented in Appendix 2.

Box 2: Why is a foresight process undertaken

In addressing Box 2 of the framework, the participants had to identify the core purposes of the foresight process. These purposes included:

- (Scientifically) exploring drivers and links
- Supporting decision and policy making
- Communicating and awareness raising for changes
- Deliberating and mediating different interests/worldviews (through the foresight process)
- Analysing trade-offs between different options

Box 3: Funders, organizers, and participants

Box 3 involved the identification of the funding bodies mobilizing the foresight exercise, organizations involved in the organization, and those actively participating in the process. Here, it was important to explain how different organizations and institutions may be engaged at different points in the process.

Box 4: Conceptions of the future

This section involved a discussion of the different ways that the future can be conceived in foresight exercises. For example, multiple, probable, plural, performative, etc.

Box 5: Aspired policy impacts

Connected with Box 2, here the participants had to examine the policy impacts of the foresight exercise:

- Formal planning and strategy development
- Building broad-based societal preparedness and capacities
- Mobilizing diverse actors
- Interrogating political implications of future-oriented sociotechnical imaginaries

Box 6: Overarching aims

- Future risk reduction
- Reflexive navigation of future trajectories
- More transformative futures
- Pointing to the politics of anticipation

Box 7: Relationship between policy impact and purpose

This component of the framework tried to explore if and how the relationship between policy impacts and purposes can be mapped.

The activities contributed to the outcomes of a ‘methods exchange’ survey that had been circulated among the Foresight4Food Initiative’s Community of Practice before the workshop. In combination with the workshop activities, the survey helped in testing the viability of the framework and exploring potential ways forward.

The next section summarizes some of the key findings of the workshop.

Summary of Proceedings

The methods workshop explored the key theoretical concepts of foresight and anticipatory governance, considerations in the foresight process, and the community’s contribution to the transformation of food systems. The first day of the workshop focused on exploring the foresight and governance spaces (see Figure 2) through interactive exercises and discussing different conceptions of the future. The participants filled out the boxes in the framework according to foresight exercises they had engaged in. The activity was completed by exploring policy impacts and overarching aims of foresight exercises and examining potential next steps for the F4F Initiative and the CoP.

Day 1 began with an exploration of how the Foresight4Food’s framework has been trialled in different country contexts, and how these national and regional level processes have contributed to decision making. These discussions led to a few key considerations when connecting foresight and governance:

- Futures: The importance of more explicit communication of conceptualizations of the future, and consistency of use to ensuring that different futures do not get mixed up, identifying who works with

which concepts of the futures at what point in the foresight and governance process, and how we might articulate different futures working with each other

- Inclusion: The value of including all stakeholders at the relevant stages, defining the 'user' and the 'use'.
- Ownership: Identifying who does the agenda setting and problem framing as initial actions within anticipatory governance processes
- Literacy: The differences between making policy processes more 'anticipation literate' instead of making anticipation more 'governance literate'
- Perspectives: Considering the differences between a process-oriented approach as compared to a dilemma-oriented approach and then taking a transdisciplinary approach to identify necessary stakeholders
- Practicality: Identifying the practical offers and transition pathways that can contribute to the transformation of food systems

Key Takeaways

The key takeaways from the discussions on foresight projects and initiatives on Day 2 can be organized as follows:

Methods

Projects consist of multiple work packages combining a mix of methods and tools, used in sequential/complementary ways. While some methods/tools are commonly used within a project, most often crop models, IAMs, combined with a participatory process, this does not have to be a participatory scenario process, but participation can also take place via expert panels, interviews and fuzzy cognitive mapping.

Participation

Projects showed a high variety of stakeholder participation, representing various sectors and interests. Interaction with clients generally starts in the early stages of the project to co-design (parts of) the project.

Purposes

Projects seem to be undertaken for multiple purposes, which are not necessarily explicitly mentioned in the proposals. At the same time, being clear about the purposes seems important for the rest of the foresight design, e.g. selection of methods/tools and stakeholders

Ultimate societal aim

While stakeholders could relate their work to all four aims mentioned in the presentation, the prevailing aims were either reducing future climate/environmental risks, or contributing to more transformative futures

Future

Most participants work with multiple plausible futures, some with probable futures, and a few taking plural futures as a starting point (in which plurality of perspectives about future change remain present throughout the project). Performativity of future claims/imaginaries were rarely taken central to the projects. Having multiple methods/tools in one project means that multiple conceptions of the future coincide in one project. The impact of having multiple future conceptions in one project on its outcomes is not entirely clear, as these conceptions often remain implicit. However, in some cases it is perceived to influence the methods chosen, the participants selected, and the outcomes of the foresight process. These relationships should be further explored.

Policy implications

The participants could relate to all four categories of implications that their work aspires to have in the present. Most prominently, foresight projects aspire to provide outcomes that allow for strategically prioritizing and planning policy action and investments. However, as projects combine multiple aims and foresight methods, a variety of policy implications co-exist. For example, strategic policy planning is often combined building capacity and preparedness to deal with diverse futures as they unfold, as well as co-creating futures more democratically, and in some instances, interrogating assumptions.

Contributions for the Food Summit 2021

1. Dashboard
 - a. Supporting an understanding of who in the community is doing what in which perspectives and contexts
2. National Level Processes
 - a. Connecting with national agencies involved in foresight
 - b. Supporting national level processes in the lead up to the summit
 - c. Develop experimental platforms and laboratories to test transformative approaches
 - d. Running case studies at the national level, covering data rich and data poor countries
3. Synthesis
 - a. Combination of national level data with appropriate models
 - b. Developing new ways of examining the trade-offs and nexus between food security, nutrition, sustainability, and poverty
 - c. Examine what has been done well in the food foresight space, what has not been, and examine the impact of peripheries of food foresight activities (e.g. artists in residence)
4. Capacity Building
 - a. Experimenting with new forms of capacity building
 - b. Bringing in foresight agencies to contribute to processes
 - c. Innovating on how to engage those who have been historically left out of foresight processes
5. Strategic Positioning of the F4F Initiative
 - a. Assisting in the design of the summit and focus on keeping foresight as a backbone
 - b. Using the October 2020 AgMIP meeting to kickstart discussions around the summit
 - c. Linking into existing food foresight players
 - d. Strengthen the (early) visibility of the Initiative in the necessary networks
 - e. Exploiting the benefit of the relative freedom of the Initiative with addressing controversial and innovative ideas

Next Steps for the F4F CoP

1. Agree as a community on accepted definitions of 'impact' in this area
2. Agree on a set of transformative scenarios for the future of food systems
3. Vision a direction of travel for the food system and the CoP's role within
4. Examine the role of AI and digitalization in food systems
5. Exploring policy cycle analysis using scenarios
6. Exploring incentive structures to drive desirable change in food systems

Day 2 focused on identifying tangible activities going forward through four key themes:

Supporting Community of Practitioners

- Co-production of a resource database
 - Online tool on methods with various entry points (e.g. through purpose)
 - Webinars to function as a compact knowledge packet on foresight exercises
 - Library of foresight exercises with reflections on practice
 - Searchable foresight studies database with tags
- Improving normative scenarios through collaborative exchange
- Fostering the next generation of foresight practitioners
- Identifying boundaries of the Foresight4Food Initiative
- Resource mobilization
 - Joint projects focused on specific objectives
 - Functioning as a channel of resources and opportunities
- Fostering best practice in user dialogues and transition practices
- Engaging with groups usually excluded from processes (e.g. elderly and children)
- Identifying process of measuring success, failure, and impact
- Clarifying terminologies, ontologies, and epistemologies

Food Systems Foresight Synthesis and Analysis

- Setting boundaries for the synthesis exercise
- Establishing a criteria to evaluate foresight studies
 - Keeping the food system at the heart of the synthesis exercise
 - Examining what domains and relationships have yet to be covered in food systems foresight
- Mapping relationships and potential intervention points to determine gaps for future work
- Exploring a variety of knowledge outputs to enlarge knowledge on multiple fronts
- Developing a consultative mechanism
- Crowdsourcing the synthesis resulting in a short framing paper highlighting the importance of the process
- Using the synthesis paper/knowledge product to mobilize funding for a consultative and moderation process

Supporting Country-level Work

- Identifying how existing exercises can be built on
- Using the pillars of the summit to identify the countries to focus on
- Examining where added value can be brought in and where a unique contribution by the community can be made
- Identifying what activities donor organizations want to fund
- Acknowledge and plan for the competing spaces between food systems and foresight communities
- Identifying areas of synergies between different communities and exercises

Conclusion

The ambitious set of objectives for the workshop and the complex discussions emerging from the activities highlighted the necessity and as-yet unexplored depths of the relationships between foresight methods and governance processes.

The outputs of the workshop will directly contribute to the upcoming paper submitted to the Earth System Governance Conference an additional set of journal articles being discussed (for more information, please contact Saher, Monika, or Karlijn), the resources dashboard for the Foresight4Food website, and in shaping the future direction and resource mobilization for the Initiative. The CoP was invited to engage over ideas of potential sources of funding, collaborative projects, and activities contributing to the Food Summit 2021.

Appendix: Objectives and Agenda

Meeting Objectives:

- Exchange and assess food foresight methods and processes considering various purposes, including qualitative and quantitative approaches and a combination of both;
- Discuss the role of foresight approaches in anticipatory policy and decision-making;
- Explore options for innovations around foresight approaches to enhance their applicability and impact;
- Plan options with the F4F community to align activities with the Food Summit 2021.

Day 1: Thursday, 27/02/2020	
Foresight methods used in the food foresight community	
10:00-10:30	Welcome, Introductions, and Objectives
10:30-11:00	Presentation and discussion on the role of foresight in policy and governance
11:00-11:30	Information Café: Foresight methods <i>Interactive session: Initiatives and methods represented by participants in the workshop, and who organises and participates part in these</i>
11:30-12:30	Exploring methods in use in the food foresight community (Box 1 & 3) <i>Plenary session: The breadth of methods and processes in the food foresight community, and feedback from information café</i>
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:00	Purpose of Foresight Exercises and Methods/ Why is a foresight process undertaken? (Box 2) <i>Plenary discussion examining purposes for conducting a foresight process, mapping foresight exercises to purposes, and considering who decides on methods</i>
15:00-15:30	Role of foresight in anticipatory governance processes <i>Presentation: The aims for engaging with the future in governance processes, the role of foresight in it, and insights from the Foresight4Food community of practice</i>
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break
16:00-16:30	Information Café: Foresight in governance processes (Box 4, 5 & 6) <i>Interactive session: Role of foresight process in governance in each exercise</i>
16:30-17:30	Food Summit 2021 <i>Discussion: potential contribution by F4F Community of Practice</i>
19:00	Dinner
Day 2: Friday 28/02/2020	
Role of Foresight in Governance Processes	
08:30-09:30	Steering Group meeting (closed)
09:30-10:00	Recap of Day 1 <i>Roadmap of the day</i>
10:00 -10:45	Conceptions of the future in foresight (Box 4) <i>Plenary: Discussion of results</i>
10:45 -12:00	What are the ultimate aims and implications for policy action in the present? (Box 5&6) <i>Interactive session in which participants identify aspired policy impact, and how methods and exercises used are contributing to this impact</i>
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-14:00	Identifying gaps in foresight and methods <i>Plenary and Discussion: the future of foresight in governance, identifying gaps and spaces for innovation in using foresight for different purposes and different ultimate aims</i>
14:00-15:30	Ways forward for more governance literate foresight <i>Discussion: Scoping a set of activities to take the outcomes of the workshop forward</i>
15:30-16:00	Concluding Observations